Syllabus subtopic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

Prelims and Mains focus: about the SCO meeting to be hosted by India; likely implications of worsening Indo-Pak relations on the meeting; about SCO: members and significance; about RATS

News: Leaders of India and Pakistan are expected to come face-to-face at a meeting of the heads of government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be hosted by India later this year.

About the meeting

- The event will bring together leaders from eight SCO member states—India, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan joined the SCO as full members in 2017.

- Russia is to host a meeting of the heads of state of SCO countries in July, but this year for the first time India is chairing one of the main SCO bodies, the council of heads of government and prime ministers of the organization’s member states.

- The member states have highly appreciated India’s willingness to host the meeting of prime ministers in autumn 2020.

- Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan should be attending the meet, according to protocol, as it is a meeting of the heads of government.

- India would need to send an invite to Khan. However, given that tensions have been running high between the two countries for almost a year, the possibility of a high-level visit from Pakistan is far from certain.

India-Pakistan deteriorating relations

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On 1 January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned leaders of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives to greet them on the New Year but pointedly left out Pakistan.

- Ties between the two countries took a nosedive when a terrorist belonging to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) drove an explosive laden vehicle into a security convoy killing 40 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force in February 2019.

- A few days later India bombed a JeM training camp in Pakistan’s Balakot region. A day later Pakistan launched an aerial raid against Indian military targets in Kashmir, which was repulsed by the Indian Air Force.

- The situation worsened when India revoked a section in its Constitution that bestowed special status on Kashmir in August and integrated the region more closely with the rest of the country.

- Pakistan slammed the Indian move, which took Kashmir off the dialogue table with Pakistan.

- Despite the tensions, India and Pakistan did take part in an SCO military exercise hosted by Russia in September. Pakistan, however, did not send any representative to a military medicine conference of SCO member-states hosted by India in the same month.

**About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai.

- **Founding members**: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001.
The SCO’s main goals are: strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

Presently, the SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.

The SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

About Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO. It serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Head of RATS is elected to a three-year term. Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS.